

Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights implications

National vaccine deployment

Lithuania

5 May 2021

Contractor: Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences

DISCLAIMER: This document was commissioned under contract as background material for comparative analysis by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project 'Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights implications'. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

Table of contents

1	National vaccine deployment – planning and overview of priority groups	3
2	Vaccination rollout – communication, targeted outreach, registration, and administration of vaccinations	11
2.1	Channels, means and measures to inform about the national vaccination plan.....	11
2.2	What are the (pre-) registration channels for vaccination put in place?	12
2.3	How are the vaccinations administered?	12
3	Challenges and promising practices.....	14
3.1	Challenges.....	14
3.2	Promising practices	14

1 National vaccine deployment – planning and overview of priority groups

In Lithuania, national vaccine deployment plan or COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List¹ was approved by the Minister of Health on 23 December 2020. It has 6 amendments until 5 May 2021. There are three main priority groups in the Vaccination Priority List: (1) health care workers, especially those working with COVID-19 patients; (2) persons under high risk of being negatively affected by COVID-19 disease (older people, individuals with chronic disease, etc.); (3) key workers performing essential functions (social workers, teachers, firefighters etc.). Table 1 provides the information on the planned phases of vaccination for the prioritised groups.

¹ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed Vaccination Priority List of COVID-19 Disease (Coronavirus Infection)', No. V-3006, 23 December 2020. Updated version valid from 27 March 2021 (['Dėl skiepavimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina prioritetinių asmenų grupių nustatymo'](#)).

Table 1. Lithuania, Changes of COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List

Specific groups identified in the national vaccine deployment plan	23/12/2020 Vaccination Priority List, I edition	05/01/2021 Vaccination Priority List, II edition	24/01/2021 Vaccination Priority List, III edition	28/01/2021 Vaccination Priority List, IV edition	19/03/2021 Vaccination Priority List, V edition	24/03/2021 Vaccination Priority List, VI edition	26/03/2021 Vaccination Priority List, VI edition
<i>older persons; indicate age groups specified</i>	NO	YES In order of priority by oldest age group (1) Ages 80+ (2) Ages 75-79 (3) Ages 70-74 (4) Ages 65-69	YES No change	YES No change	YES No change	YES New groups for prioritisation (1) Ages 55-64 (2) Ages 45-54 (3) Ages 35-44 (4) Ages 34 and younger	YES No change
<i>persons with underlying health problems</i>	NO	YES (1) Persons with underlying health problems such as immune deficiency disease, etc. (2) Persons in palliative	YES No major change except some conditions have been clarified	YES New groups for prioritisation (1) Cancer patients (2) HIV patients	YES No change	YES No major change except some conditions have been clarified with IDC code.	YES No change

		care institutions (3) People with chronic diseases					
persons with disabilities	NO	YES New groups for prioritisation Residents of social care institutions including older people living in long-term care facilities	YES No change	YES No change	YES No change	YES New groups for prioritisation Persons with disabilities and their family members	YES No change
key workers (on the basis of their job not their personal characteristics) – e.g. health workers; persons working in care homes; teachers	YES Health care workers (except those working in palliative care)	YES New groups for prioritisation (1) Health care workers, trainees, and students working with COVID-19 patients (2) Health care workers from reanimation	YES New groups for prioritisation (1) Health care workers working with high-risk patients (2) Health care and municipal vehicle drivers who	YES New groups for prioritisation All other social care staff.	YES New groups for prioritisation President, Prime Minister, Members of the Government, Members of the Parliament	YES New groups for prioritisation (1) Mayors and Administration’s Directors of Municipalities, workers of Parliament’s secretariat. (2) Broader categories of teachers and	YES New groups for prioritisation Few groups were added to key workers performing essential functions: retail and food industry staff.

		<p>and intensive care</p> <p>(3) Health care workers working with cancer and 65+ patients</p> <p>(4) Other health care workers and volunteers involved in treatment of COVID-19</p> <p>(5) Health care workers of mobile units and fever clinics</p> <p>(6) Health workers working in palliative care</p> <p>(7) Social care staff</p> <p>(8) Experts working on COVID-19</p>	<p>have contact with COVID-19 patients</p> <p>(3) Social care volunteers; child services staff; assistants of disabled persons; sign language translators</p> <p>(4) Military and intelligence personnel participating in military and international operations</p> <p>(5) Members of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic teams</p>			<p>school staff, secondary school graduates, medical and health care trainee students</p> <p>(3) Diplomats, consular workers and their family members, Venice Biennale and Eurovision participants, professional athletes going abroad.</p>	
--	--	---	--	--	--	---	--

		<p>outbreak investigations</p> <p>(9) Other health care workers and not working directly with COVID-19 patients</p> <p>(10) Pharmacy staff</p> <p>(11) Teachers in kindergarten, pre-school, primary school and special needs education teachers</p> <p>(12) Key workers performing essential functions</p>					
persons belonging to ethnic/national minorities	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

<i>persons experiencing homelessness</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>persons with drug addiction dependencies</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>persons with low literacy levels</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>persons deprived of their liberty</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>persons without residence or with insecure legal status (such as refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants)</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<i>persons with underlying health problems and medical workers who recovered from COVID-19 in previous three months or had</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

<i>positive antibody test</i>							
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In **Lithuania**, only minor changes of COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List were adopted by the Minister of Health from the beginning of January 2021. Three main priority groups (health care workers, persons under high risk of being negatively affected by COVID-19 disease (older people, individuals with chronic disease, etc.), and key workers performing essential functions remained the same all over the period. Though Ministry of Health adopted certain changes, national media criticised them. According to Lithuanian Radio and Television, COVID-19 vaccination process has suffered from a lack of clarity, insufficient vaccine deliveries, changing priorities and vaccination schedules². There are no inclusion criteria such as vulnerability to infection, social vulnerability, multiple criteria stated behind the definition of priority groups in the COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List.

In late March, the Government of **Lithuania** changed its vaccination priority list and included the country's top officials as well as members of the parliament³. Lithuanian President and Prime Minister were vaccinated against COVID-19 publicly aiming at promoting trust to the AstraZeneca jab and COVID-19 vaccine overall. The Health Minister included top officials into COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List in 19 March 2021 in order to help boosting confidence in the vaccination process⁴. The list was expanded by including education staff, cleaning and catering workers, school graduates, mayors, and people with chronic diseases in March⁵. Supermarket workers were left out despite the initial plans to include them. Furthermore, police officers who operate within the system of the Ministry of Interior became the last group to receive COVID-19 vaccine before mass vaccination is rolled out.

² Lithuania, Valiauskaitė, A., Petrauskas, E., Lithuanian Radio and Television (*Lietuvos radijas ir televizija*) (2021), '[Lithuania's vaccination strategy: balancing between chaos and efficiency](#)', published on 2 April 2021.

³ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed Vaccination Priority List of COVID-19 Disease (Coronavirus Infection)', No. V-3006, 23 December 2020. Updated version valid from 22 March 2021 ('[Dėl skiepavimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina prioritetinių asmenų grupių nustatymo](#)').

⁴ Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television (*Lietuvos radijas ir televizija*) (2021), '[Lithuanian president, PM get AstraZeneca shot to bolster trust in vaccine](#)', published on 22 March 2021.

⁵ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed Vaccination Priority List of COVID-19 Disease (Coronavirus Infection)', No. V-3006, 23 December 2020. Updated version valid from 25 March 2021 ('[Dėl skiepavimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina prioritetinių asmenų grupių nustatymo](#)').

2 Vaccination rollout – communication, targeted outreach, registration, and administration of vaccinations

In **Lithuania**, vaccination process is coordinated by local authorities – administrations of municipalities (*savivaldybės administracija*). Based on the current legislation regarding division of competences between local and national authorities⁶, municipalities are the founders of the majority of health care institutions on local level. Directors of Municipal administrations have appointed a local COVID-19 vaccination process coordinator (municipal medical doctor or other administrative staff) and health care institution responsible for coordinating vaccination process in each out of 60 municipalities. Every municipality has to follow COVID-19 Vaccination Rules⁷ and COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List⁸ approved by the Minister of Health. Nevertheless, each municipality has authority to decide upon channels, means and measures to inform communities about vaccination, define registration channels for vaccination and designate locations for vaccination station.

2.1 Channels, means and measures to inform about the national vaccination plan

Information regarding COVID-19 vaccination is provided on official websites of the Government of **Lithuania**⁹, local municipalities¹⁰, local health care institutions¹¹, enterprises. The Ministry of Health initiated vaccination awareness raising campaign “Shoulder for a Freedom” (*Petys už laisvę!*). Short video and audio clips

⁶ Lithuania, The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas*) (1994) Law on Local Self-government', No. I-533, 7 July 1994', updated version valid from 1 February 2021 ([Lietuvos Respublikos vietos savivaldos įstatymas](#)).

⁷ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed COVID-19 (Coronavirus Infection) Vaccination Rules', No. V-2997. Updated version valid from 9 April 2021 ([Dėl Gyventojų skiepijimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina organizavimo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo](#)).

⁸ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed Vaccination Priority List of COVID-19 Disease (Coronavirus Infection)', No. V-3006, 23 December 2020. Updated version valid from 27 March 2021 ([Dėl skiepijimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina prioritetinių asmenų grupių nustatymo](#)).

⁹ Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė*) (2021) '[Vakcinacija](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021.

¹⁰ Lithuania, Vilnius city municipality (*Vilniaus miesto savivaldybė*) (2021), '[Kada ateis jūsų eilė vakcinai](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021.

¹¹ Lithuania, The Central Polyclinic (*Centro poliklinika*) (2021), '[COVID-19](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021.

were broadcasted via national media (radio, television and internet)¹². The government and public authorities introduced national¹³ and local¹⁴ vaccination hotlines. Information about vaccination has been made available in different languages depending on ethnic minorities living in municipalities. For instance, information was provided in both languages Lithuanian and Russian in Visaginas municipality inhabited by large Russian population¹⁵. While in Šalčininkai municipality, where large Polish community lives, information was provided in Lithuanian and Polish languages¹⁶. In addition, information related to vaccination priority was provided by the Government of Lithuania via alert messages to mobile phones¹⁷.

2.2 What are the (pre-) registration channels for vaccination put in place?

In **Lithuania**, registration channels for COVID-19 vaccination vary in local municipalities. Registration channels for vaccination are following: websites, hotlines/call centres, email letters, family doctors, employers, health or social care institution¹⁸. There are alternatives for digital access to vaccine registration such as phone call for those who are in need for example, elderly or those without access to internet.

2.3 How are the vaccinations administered?

In **Lithuania**, each municipality coordinate the vaccination process in their own way. According to the COVID-19 Vaccination Rules¹⁹ there are (1) five national

¹² Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2021), '[Petys už laisvę](#)' official Youtube channel, seen on 4 May 2021.

¹³ Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė*) (2021) '[Hotline for Lithuanian residents](#)', official website seen on 7 May 2021.

¹⁴ Lithuania, Vilnius city municipality (*Vilniaus miesto savivaldybė*) (2021), '[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)', official website seen on 7 May 2021.

¹⁵ Lithuania, Šalčininkai district municipality (*Šalčininkų rajono savivaldybė*) (2021), '[Szczepienia](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021.

¹⁶ Lithuania, Visaginas municipality (*Visagino savivaldybė*) (2021), '[Приглашаем жителей самоуправления зарегистрироваться на вакцинацию от COVID-19](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021.

¹⁷ Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television (*Lietuvos radijas ir televizija*) (2021), '[Emergency alert in Lithuania asks seniors to get Covid-19 jab](#)' around government to protest vaccination plan', published on 12 April 2021.

¹⁸ Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė*) (2021) '[Vakcinacija savivaldybėse ir kontaktai](#)', official website seen on 7 May 2021.

¹⁹ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed COVID-19 (Coronavirus Infection)

vaccination centres which coordinate overall vaccination process in Lithuania, (2) health care institutions which coordinate vaccination process on local level and vaccinate people, and (3) health care institutions which only vaccinate people. Vaccination is executed in vaccination centres in health care and social care institutions municipal buildings or other public buildings such as sport or public event arenas. Information about the actual vaccination process, the name of the vaccine and any potential side effects is provided directly at vaccination centres, via internet or phone call. People are free to choose the vaccine manufacturer. The selection can be made from the manufacturer vaccines available at the vaccination centre at that time.

In **Lithuania**, national media announced²⁰ that foreign citizens will be eligible to receive the vaccine according to the age or priority group they are in. However, several conditions apply. According to the Lithuanian Government²¹, foreign nationals that are eligible to receive the vaccine include: all permanent residents in Lithuania, including foreign nationals and stateless people, people who are covered with the mandatory health insurance, EU citizens who have declared their residency in Lithuania and have registered at their local health institution. Both the vaccine itself and the vaccination service itself will be free of charge. Information regarding vaccination for foreigners is in Lithuanian and Russian²² languages on the official website of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. Information in other languages depends on local municipality decision. For instance, all information regarding vaccination is available online in Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, and English languages in Vilnius city municipality²³.

Vaccination Rules', No. V-2997. Updated version valid from 9 April 2021 (['Dėl Gyventojų skiepijimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina organizavimo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo'](#)).

²⁰ Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television (*Lietuvos radijas ir televizija*) (2021), '[Foreigners in Lithuania and Covid-19 vaccination – what you need to know](#)' around government to protest vaccination plan', published on 9 February 2021.

²¹ Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė*) (2021) '[Vakcinacija](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021.

²² Lithuania, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė*) (2021) '[Вакцинация](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021 (in Russian language).

²³ Lithuania, Vilnius city municipality (*Vilniaus miesto savivaldybė*) (2021), '[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)', official website seen on 4 May 2021 (in English language).

3 Challenges and promising practices

3.1 Challenges

In **Lithuania**, local media reported inequalities in access to and uptake of the vaccine for persons in the same priority group. Police officers that operate within the system of the Ministry of the Interior became the last group to receive COVID-19 vaccine before mass vaccination is rolled out. As a result, Lithuanian police set up 'roadblock' around government to protest vaccination plan²⁴.

There was an incident of favouritism in accessing vaccines contrary to established COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List in **Lithuania**. Local media announced that an owner of a medical company in Šilalė, small town in western Lithuania, received the jobs for himself and his family that were originally allocated for the health care workers²⁵. Mayor of Šilalė district municipality called the incident 'immoral'. The Health Minister and the mayor pledged to launch an investigation.

In **Lithuania**, local media published an article of European Parliament member Liudas Mažylis about discriminatory changes of COVID-19 Vaccination Priority List²⁶. The EP member raised a concern about including teachers and other educational workers into Vaccination Priority List in prior position to persons in the age 60+. According to EP member it may violate fundamental human rights and EU Vaccines Strategy. The Prime Minister argued that the change of Vaccination Priority List was implemented due to the lack of those willing to be vaccinated (notably by AstraZeneca vaccine) among elderly people²⁷.

3.2 Promising practices

In **Lithuania**, vaccination is carried out in vaccination centres which are located in every municipality across the whole country. People can choose the most convenient vaccination centre in municipality of their place of residence. However, some people in vulnerable situations are facing difficulties in accessing health and vaccination services. COVID-19 Vaccination Rules²⁸ approved by the Minister of

²⁴ Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television (*Lietuvos radijas ir televizija*) (2021), '[Lithuanian police set up 'roadblock' around government to protest vaccination plan](#)', published on 7 April 2021.

²⁵ Lithuania, BNS, Lithuanian Radio and Television (*Lietuvos radijas ir televizija*) (2021), '[After some skip line to get vaccine, Lithuanian president urges tighter controls](#)', published on 12 January 2021.

²⁶ Lithuania, Mažylis, L. 15min (2021), '[Ar valstybė, atidedanti vyresnio amžiaus žmonių skiepijimą, nepažeidžia esminių žmogaus teisių?](#)', published on 5 February 2021.

²⁷ Lithuania, Plikūnė, D., BNS, delfi.lt (2021), '[Šimonytė paaiškino naujus skiepijimo prioritetus: tai dvi atskiros eilės](#)', published on 8 April 2021.

²⁸ Lithuania, The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Respublikos Sveikatos apsaugos ministerija*) (2020), Decree 'Due to State-Reimbursed COVID-19 (Coronavirus Infection)

Health allows vaccination at home for those who are in need. Health care institutions which are executing COVID-19 vaccination offer transportation services for those who are not able to come to vaccination centres. In addition, vaccination centres have a mobile vaccine team which provide services at home. Vaccination at home service is ordered by using ordinary registration procedure²⁹. As a result, these people have the equal rights to health like the other.

Vaccination Rules', No. V-2997. Updated version valid from 9 April 2021 (['Dėl Gyventojų skiepavimo valstybės biudžeto lėšomis įsigyjama COVID-19 ligos \(koronaviruso infekcijos\) vakcina organizavimo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo'](#)).

²⁹ The information was provided by Kaunas city municipality hotline, via phone call on 7 May 2021.